Castlemaine Naturalist

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Monthly newsletter of the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Cortinarius archeri at Sailors Falls

photo - Denis Hurley

Terrick Terrick

Chris Morris

Terrick Terrick , locally known as "The Forest" is 200kms north of Castlemaine and never disappointing but well worth a visit even in dry times. Its an easy drive across the northern plains skirting Bendigo to the park entrance at Mitiamo, another semi-deserted township of inland Victoria. A closed Hotel tells it all. The same at Mologa on the edge of the forest and long since abandoned leaving the remnants of three schools and cottage foundations

The isolated granite outcrops and the forest of White Cypress Pines gives it character and marks it out from the surrounding countryside of cleared farmland. The history of the landscape goes back thousands of years judging by the dating of Aboriginal remains and tree scars crafted for canoes which suggests a wetter riverine type of country in earlier times. Lignum Swamps together with Black Box front the dry creeks and provide good nesting hollows.

Major Mitchell came through in 1836 and wrote of the fertility of the land as viewed from Pyramid Hill This encouraged the squatters in his wake to take up the land except the small segment of bush which became the forest. There are no other parks close too, just a vast expanse of paddocks – cleared of natural vegetation. Old-timers tell of seemingly thousands of Budgerigars wheeling as one in a flash of color, gold and green. These have gone. As have the Ducks with young in large numbers now that their water is no longer available in dams, swamps and creeks.

Grey Box and Yellow Box are the principle trees other than the White Cypress Pine which dominates and determines the forest - but was it planted in earlier times? Or does it represent the natural growth after stands of the pine elsewhere have disappeared under the axe and plough. The open native grasslands and woodlands provide valuable habitat for endangered flora and fauna and the best example of this is the Plains Wanderer related to shorebirds. Barely 500 survive in Victoria. Their rapid decline has been due to loss of native vegetation and many years of predation by foxes and feral cats. Despite this, over 170 species of birds have been recorded

taking in Grey-crowned Babblers, Bush Stone-curlews, a plentiful supply of Red capped Robins, Hooded Robins, Jacky Winter Robins, Gilbert and Rufous Whistlers, Crested Shrike-tit, Black-chinned, Yellow plumed and and White plumed Honeyeaters, Southern White face, and the Brown Treecreepers, Diamond Firetail Finch and Zebra Finch.

The major aim is to link the patchwork of small reserves throughout Victoria. One of the first steps is to ensure that areas of public land are linked and have a well-resourced management.

Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater – early 2010 national results

Chris Timewell

As part of the lead up to the first official survey weekend of the year (on the 15-16 May 2010), the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club received a letter from the conveners of Birds Australia Woodland Birds for Biodiversity project. The following is a summary of this letter.

Swift Parrots (*Lathamus discolor*)

In October 2009, 50 people completed surveys at over 700 locations in eastern and north-west Tasmania. Swift Parrots were documented at 39 of 86 sites on Bruny Island (off the south-east coast) and at only 32 of the 600 or so sites across the remainder of the state. Nest monitoring on Bruny Island identified that Swift Parrot breeding activity was relatively poor through the 2009-10 season, which they attribute to the late and patchy flowering of Tasmanian Blue Gum. This tree's nectar is an important component of the Swift Parrot diet during their breeding season.

The first mainland Swift Parrot sighting for the season was of two birds on 29 January 2010 in East Gippsland. A few more groups were seen over the next couple of months, but the bulk of the population appears to have migrated to the mainland around the Easter weekend. By late April 2010, Birds Australia had received 70 separate reports of Swift Parrot sightings from across the mainland, with the majority (67) from Victoria. Late flowering Grey Box and early flowering Yellow Gum and Red Ironbark have attracted the largest groups around Talbot, St Arnaud and Muckleford. Central Victoria and the inland slopes of NSW are flowering heavily this year,the best they have been for many years, and are probably being used across a more extensive area by Swift Parrots than have yet been detected. Contrastingly, on the south coast of NSW which supported the majority of Swift Parrots last year, there has been a relatively low flowering intensity this year and no parrots sighted. Unusually, several large flocks of Swift Parrots (including one flock of up to 100 birds) were still present in south-eastern Tasmania in late April.

Regent Honeyeaters (*Anthochaera carunculata*)

On the 2nd of January, a single Regent Honeyeater was first detected at Doonside, (on the western fringe of greater Sydney), and remained for a couple of weeks. Others were briefly seen early in the year at Windsor Downs Reserve (25km NW of Sydney) and Umina Beach (near the mouth of the Hawkesbury River). In Gippsland,

two adult birds had been observed to successfully breed and raise two juveniles in late 2009. All of these birds were also banded in late 2009, and were seen for the last time in early January 2010. It is presumed that they have departed on a post-breeding dispersal.

No more Regent Honeyeaters were recorded until mid-March 2010, with a group of up to eight birds seen in the Werakata NP (in the Hunter Valley). In early April, a Regent Honeyeater was heard calling near central Bendigo, but follow-up surveys failed to find it.

Birds Australia were most excited about recent Regent Honeyeater sightings in north-east Victoria, where Mugga Ironbark has begun flowering strongly and earlier than usual. A group of three birds were detected in the Killawarra State Park (at the northern end of the Warby Ranges), including one which had been banded at the Chiltern Box-Ironbark National Park in 2006 (about 50 km away). Since then, there have been a scattering of sightings of Regent Honeyeaters from Killawarra, Chiltern and Milbrodale (in the Upper Hunter valley, NSW). However, none of the captive bred birds that were released at Chiltern in 2008 have been re-sighted.

On the off-chance that you do see a Regent Honeyeater, Birds Australia stresses the importance of looking for bands on their legs, particularly the pink bands that denote the captive bred individuals released in 2008. They also stress the importance of letting them know as soon as possible if either Swift Parrots or Regent Honeyeaters are detected (particularly the latter), and submitting completed data-sheets for any sightings, irrespective of whether it is the official survey weekend or not.

Contact Details: Chris Tzaros (for Swifties) and Dean Ingwersen (for Regents) on 03 9347 0757. Further information and data sheets can be found on the Birds Australia website (http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/our-projects/woodland-birds-for-biodiversity.html).

Common names

Aaron Hall

I wish to present an alternative view to the standardisation of common names for our wildlife. Common names of our wildlife are part of the rich linguistic culture that we have and should not be shunned or homogenised. To say that it is more practical to have a single accepted list of common names may be true, but the same argument is often used by bigoted people who insist that all languages other than English should be abolished in Australia. I believe it is indeed enriching to have languages other than English used in our community, and the same goes for other common names of our wildlife. Viva la difference. However practical linguistic homogenisation is for our society, I believe we are all diminished by it.

Scientific names are quite another matter. They are not part of our rich linguistic diversity, but are used by scientists for scientific purposes. Common names are different. By definition, they are the names that our wildlife are commonly known by in our community, and the scientific community should leave them alone. I believe that to say that the use if different common names in different regions and generations causes confusion is overstating the case. I personally find it interesting, not confusing. I believe inclusiveness is important if we are to heighten the general

communities involvement in our natural heritage, and shunning the use of other people's version of common names does not help.

Taxonomic Changes to Birds of the Mt Alexander Shire

Chris Timewell

[continued from last month which covered Order and Family levels]

3 – Changes at the GENUS Level

From the 1994 to 2008 version of the *Systematics and Taxonomy of Australian Birds* by L. Christidis and W. Boles,, there have been fourteen changes at the genus-level affecting birds known to occur in the Mt Alexander shire. These genus-level changes, and the bird species that they affect, are summarized below.

Little Pied Cormorant *Microcarbo melanoleucos* (common in the Mt Alexander shire (MAS)) - The latin name of the Little Pied Cormorant has been changed from *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos* to *Microcarbo melanoleucos*. All of the other cormorants that are likely to occur in the local area (i.e., Little Pied, Great, Pied) remain in the genus of *Phalacrocorax*.

Lewin's Rail *Lewinia pectoralis* (rare in MAS) - The latin name of Lewin's Rail has changed from *Rallus pectoralis* to *Lewinia pectoralis*. There are no other members of either genus known to occur within Australia.

Black-tailed Native-hen *Tribonyx ventralis* (uncommon in MAS) - The latin name of the Black-tailed Native-hen has changed from *Gallinulla ventralis* to *Tribonyx ventralis*. The only other member of the *Gallinulla* genus in Australia, the Dusky Moorhen, remains in the *Gallinula* genus. There are no other members of the *Tribonyx* genus known to occur in Australia.

Silver Gull *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae* (fairly common in MAS) - The latin name of the Silver Gull has changed from *Larus novaehollandiae* to *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*. One other species of gull occurring in Australia (the Black-headed Gull – a vagrant visitor), has also had its genus changed from *Larus* to *Chroicocephalus.* There are no other members of the *Chroicocephalus* genus known to occur in Australia. Among others, the Pacific Gull and Kelp Gull remain in the *Larus* genus.

Galah *Eolophus roseicapillus* (very common in MAS) - The latin name of the Galah has changed from *Cacatua roseicapilla* to *Eolophus roseicapillus*. The Sulphur-crested Cockatoo and corellas remain in the *Cacatua* genus. There are no other members of the *Eolophus* genus occurring in Australia.

Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo *Chalcites basalis* (common in MAS), **Black-eared Cuckoo *Chalcites osculans*** (uncommon in MAS), **Shining Bronze-Cuckoo *Chalcites lucidus*** (fairly common in MAS) - All Australian cuckoos previously in the *Chrysococcyx* genus have been moved into the *Chalcites* genus. There were previously no members of the *Chalcites* genus occurring in Australia.

Pallid Cuckoo *Cacomantis pallidus* (common in MAS) - The latin name of the Pallid Cuckoo has been changed from *Cuculus pallidus* to *Cacomantis pallidus*. The Oriental Cuckoo is now the remaining member of the *Cuculus* genus known to occur in Australia (it occurs in the northern and eastern areas of Australia, and has not been recorded from the MAS). There are a number of Australian cuckoos already within the *Cacomantis* genus, including one which occurs in the local area (the Fan-tailed Cuckoo *Cacomantis flabelliformis*).

Regent Honeyeater *Anthochaera phrygia* (very rare in MAS) - The latin name of the Regent Honeyeater has changed from *Xanthomyza phrygia* to *Anthochaera phrygia*, which places it in the same genus as the wattlebirds. There are no birds remaining within the *Xanthomyza* genus.

Black Honeyeater *Sugomel niger* (rare in MAS) - The latin name of the Black Honeyeater has changed from *Certhionyx niger* to *Sugomel niger*. The Black Honeyeater is the only Australia species in the *Sugomel* genus. The only other Australian species that had been in the *Certhionyx* genus, the Banded Honeyeater, also has been moved to a new genus (*Cissomela*).

Tawny-crowned Honeyeater *Glyciphila melanops* (rare in MAS) – The latin name of the Tawny-crowned Honeyeater has changed from *Phylidonyris melanops* to *Glyciphilia melanops*. The Tawny-crowned Honeyeater is the only member of the *Glyciphila* genus occurring in Australia. Of the birds known to occur within the Mt Alexander Shire, the New Holland Honeyeater and Crescent Honeyeater remain within the *Phylidonyris* genus.

Australian Magpie *Cracticus tibicen* (very common in MAS) – The latin name of the Australian Magpie has changed from *Gymnorhina tibicen* to *Cracticus tibicen*. The Australia Magpie was the only Australian species occurring in the *Gymnorhina* genus. Its move into the existing genus *Cracticus* is an acknowledgement of its close affinity with the butcherbirds, as all butcherbird species occurring within Australia are also in the genus *Cracticus*.

Fairy Martin *Petrochelidon ariel* (fairly common in MAS), **Tree Martin *Petrochelidon nigricans*** (fairly common in MAS) – Both of these martin species have been moved out of the genus *Hirundo* and into the genus *Petrochelidon*. The species component of their latin name (*ariel* and *nigricans*, respectively) has not altered. Of the birds occurring in the Mt Alexander Shire, only the Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena* remains within the genus *Hirundo*.

Common Myna *Sturnus tristis* (introduced – common in MAS) - The latin name of the Common Myna has been changed from *Acridotheres tristis* to *Sturnus tristis*. Other members of the *Sturnus* genus in Australia include the introduced Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* as well as two vagrant visitors to Australia that have not been recorded from the Mt Alexander Shire (i.e., Rosy Starling, Purple-back Starling). There are no species from the *Acridotheres* genus remaining within Australia.

Common Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* (introduced – uncommon in MAS) - The latin name of the Common Greenfinch has been changed from *Carduelis chloris* to *Chloris chloris*. The introduced European Goldfinch remains within the genus

Carduelis. There are no other members of the *Chloris* genus occurring within Australia.

4 – Changes at the SPECIES Level, including changes to common names

From the 1994 to 2008 version of the *Systematics and Taxonomy of Australian Birds* by L. Christidis and W. Boles, there have been seventeen changes at the species-level affecting birds known to occur in the Mt Alexander shire, including changes to their latin names and/or changes to common names. This includes six birds where the Australian form of a widespread internationally-occurring species is now recognised as a species in its own right. These species-level changes, and the birds that they affect, are summarized below.

Northern Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* (introduced; uncommon in Mt Alexander shire (MAS)) - The common name of this introduced duck has been changed from the 'Mallard' to the 'Northern Mallard'. There have been no changes to its latin name.

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis* (introduced; fairly common in MAS) - The common name of this introduced dove has been changed from the 'Spotted Turtle-dove' to the 'Spotted Dove'. There have been no changes to its latin name.

Australasian Darter *Anhinga novaehollandiae* (uncommon in MAS) - The Australasian form of the Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* is now recognised as a species in its own right. It has been given the new common name and latin name of 'Australasian Darter *Anhinga novaehollandiae.'*

Australian Little Bittern *Ixobrychus dubius* (rare in MAS) - The Australian form of the Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* is now recognised as a species in its own right. It has been given the new common name and latin name of 'Australian Little Bittern *Ixobrychus dubius*'.

Eastern Great Egret *Ardea modesta* (uncommon in MAS) – The Australasian form of the Great Egret *Ardea alba* is now recognized as a species in its own right. It has been given the new common name and latin name of 'Eastern Great Egret *Ardea modesta'*.

Painted Button-quail *Turnix varius* (fairly common in MAS) - The Painted Button-quail has had a minor change to its latin name, from '*Turnix varia*' to '*Turnix varius*'.

Eastern Barn Owl *Tyto javanica* (fairly common in MAS) - The Australasian form of the Barn Owl *Tyto alba* is now recognised as a species in its own right. It has been given the new common name and latin name of 'Eastern Barn Owl *Tyto javanica*'.

White-throated Treecreeper *Cormobates leucophaea* (very common in MAS) - The latin name of the White-throated Treecreeper has had a minor change from *Cormobates leucophaeus* to *Cormobates leucophaea*.

White-throated Gerygone *Gerygone albogularis* (rare in MAS) - The latin name of the White-throated Gerygone has changed from *Gerygone olivacea* to *Gerygone albogularis*.

Little Wattlebird *Anthochaera chrysoptera* (rare in MAS) - There have been no changes to the common or latin names of the Little Wattlebird where it occurs in the Mt Alexander Shire or indeed anywhere in south-eastern Australia. However, it is notable that the Western Australian form of the Little Wattlebird has been split away as a separate species, which is now known as the 'Western Wattlebird *Anthochaera lunulata'*.

Crescent Honeyeater *Phylidonyris pyrrhopterus* (rare in MAS) - The latin name of the Crescent Honeyeater has had a minor change from *Phylidonyris pyrrhoptera* to *Phylidonyris pyrrhopterus*.

Grey Fantail *Rhipidura albiscapa* (very common in MAS) - The species that was commonly known as the Grey Fantail *Rhipidura fuliginosa* has been split into two separate species. The form of the Grey Fantail occurring in the Mt Alexander Shire and across the Australian mainland (including Tasmania and many other nearby islands) retains the same common name (i.e., the Grey Fantail) but has been given the new latin name of *Rhipidura albiscapa*. Conversely, the New Zealand form of the Grey Fantail, which once occurred in the Australian territory at Lord Howe Island but is now extinct at this location, has received the new common name of the 'New Zealand Fantail', while retaining the latin name of *Rhipidura fuliginosa*.

Scarlet Robin *Petroica boodang* (common in MAS) - The species that was commonly known as the Scarlet Robin *Petroica multicolor* has been split into two separate species. The form of the Scarlet Robin occurring in the Mt Alexander Shire and across mainland Australia (including Tasmania) retains the common name of the 'Scarlet Robin' but has been given the new latin name of *Petroica boodang*. Conversely, the form of this species occurring on a number of Pacific Ocean islands (some of which are Australian territories) has received the new common name of the 'Pacific Robin', while retaining the latin name of *Petroica multicolor*.

Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis* (uncommon in MAS) – The common name of this introduced species has changed from 'Skylark' to the 'Eurasian Skylark'. There have been no changes to its latin name.

Australian Reed-warbler *Acrocephalus australis* (common in MAS) - The Australian form of the Clamorous Reed-warbler *Acrocephalus stenoreus* is now recognized as a species in its own right. It has been given the new common name and latin name of 'Australian Reed-warbler *Acrocephalus australis'*.

White-backed Swallow *Cheramoeca leucosterna* (uncommon in MAS) – The latin name of this species has had a minor change from *Cheramoeca leucosternus* to *Cheramoeca leucosterna.*

Australasian Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* (very common in MAS) – The Australasian form of Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* is now considered to be a species in its own right. It has been given a new common name, the Australasian Pipit, and retains its previous latin name.

Neil Marriott on Grevilleas

Noel Young

Botany is not my subject. I sat in the back row in case I dozed off watching a succession of images, all of the genus Grevillea. But Neils' voice filled the room, not just with decibels, but interesting stories about the history, discovery and peculiarities of a selection the numerous species of this spectacularly flowered group of Australian natives.

Although they are the third most numerous genus (after Eucalypts and Acacias), surprisingly few botanists have worked on them, and a huge amount remains to be done. Some work has begun on DNA methods, but Neil and others are laying the groundwork with traditional taxonomy. Neil has spent a lot of time scouring remote parts of Australia, and told of the finding of a number of new species, some with only one known location and a couple so rare that they were rescued by cultivation and can no longer be found in the wild.

Grevillea. alpina, Kalimna Park. Photo Noel Young

I became even more intrigued as Neil got into the subject of interaction between species, and the production of hybrids. Though well known and readily achieved by cultivation, it also occurs naturally by cross pollination. Observations of wild hybridisation he sees as "evolution in action" and continual changes provide the means of adaptation to climate variation. It's a treat to hear an expert talk easily on his subject. My eyes didn't close once.

May 2010 Observations at Barkers Creek

Geraldine Harris

Ghost Fungi and a single Striated Greenhood *Pterostylis striata* in Bush Paddock.

Metre-long Red-bellied Black Snake in veg garden; and on White Box Hill.

Single strand spider webs floating high in the sky (more visible with polaroid sunglasses on).

Also Sheet and Tangle webs in Spreading Wattle *Acacia genistifolia*. These were three-dimensional bowl-shaped webs with the sheet being supported above by a tangle of random threads where the spider rests. Possibly made by a species of Theridiid Spider (Clyne, D. (1977) *A guide to Australian* Spiders, Thomas Nelson and Sons, Melbourne.)

A Day Flying Magpie moth caught in spider web. Many mimic each other and some mimic wasps. The males often have feathery antennae.

27/5/10 Small numbers of Swift Parrots still present in tallest Grey Box and Yellow Box around house.

MAY BIRDS (44)
Chough White-winged
Cockatoo Sulphur-crested
Corella Long-billed
Cormorant Pied
Cuckoo-shrike White-breasted
Currawong Grey
Duck Black
Eagle Wedge-tailed
Fantail Grey
Finch Red-Browed
Flycatcher Restless
Galah
Grebe Australasian
Heron White-faced
Honeyeater White-plumed
Honeyeater Yellow-faced
Kookaburra
Lorikeet Purple-crowned
Magpie
Oriole Olive-backed
Pardalote Spotted
Pardalote Striated
Parrot Red-rumped
Parrot Swift
Robin Scarlet
Robin Yellow
Rosella Crimson
Rosella Eastern
Scrubwren White-browed
Shrike-thrush Grey
Shrike-tit Crested
Silvereye
Sittella Varied
Spinebill Eastern
Swallow Welcome
Thornbill Striated
Thornbill Yellow
Thornbill Yellow-rumped
Treecreeper White-throated
Wagtail Willy
Wattlebird Red
Whistler Rufous
Winter Jacky
Wren Superb Fairy

Omphalotus nidiformis Ghost fungus
The most distinctive feature of Ghost Fungus is its strong luminescence, the purpose of which is uncertain. Although it looks similar to the commercially available oyster mushroom it is poisonous and causes severe vomiting

"It is indeed the Magpie Moth, also called the Senecio Moth - (Nyctomera amicus). By the antennae it appears to be a female".- [Peter Marriot pers. comm.]

Other Observations

- From Chris Timewell - On the 16th of May, a single **Noisy Friarbird** was briefly seen perching on top of a tall tree alongside Golden Point Rd (opposite the cat and dog boarding kennels). It was chased off by an Australian Magpie. On the same day, a Fan-tailed Cuckoo and at least two Olive-backed Orioles were seen in forest habitats near the Expedition Pass Reservoir. A range of honeyeaters and both pardalote species were also seen feeding on lerps on the leaves of Red Box trees nearby.
- A pair of **Hooded Robins** on the Mia Mia track - Chris Timewell
- Also on the Mia Mia track, a **Spotted Quail – thrush** – Rita Mills
- Denis Hurley had over 100 Yellow tailed Black Cockatoos attacking his pines, and also found a Red headed Trapdoor Spider [photo right]

- Late May, huge influx of Honeyeaters in flowering Eucalypts around the golf course (Muckleford). In a short time I had six species: New Holland, Yellow faced, Fuscous, Yellow tufted, White plumed and White naped. At the same place there was a nest of **White browed Babblers** in the top of an Acacia baileyana sapling. Two adults were busily attending two fairly advanced chicks. According to my field guides, they are breeding out of season. – Noel Young

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Excursion to Sailors Falls

Noel Young

After a stroll of about half a kilometre along the track below the falls, the afternoon turned into a fungi picnic as we discovered a bonanza of different species, with just a few represented here.

Group photo above by Denis Hurley
Others by Noel Young

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Programme
June 2010

Fri June 11 meeting: PAT BINGHAM "Fine feathers make fine birds"
Sat June 12 field trip: Welsh Village

Fri July 9 meeting: NICK LAYNE The Loddon River
Sat July 10 field trip: Hamiltons Crossing on the Loddon

Fri August 13 meeting: EILEEN MACDONALD Bees

VISITORS ARE **WELCOME** AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

General meetings - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 8.00 pm.
Field Trips - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.
Business meetings - fourth Thursday of each month, except December, at Denis Hurley's; 20 Merrifield St., at 7.30 pm. All members are invited to attend.

Subscriptions for 2010
Ordinary membership: Single $27, Family $35
Pensioner or student: Single $24, Family $29
Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

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